

The Pioneer

'preparing for others to follow'

Newsletter of the Preble Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
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~ March 2017 ~

...from the Pastor's Pen...

Dear Friends,



The theme for worship on the first Sunday in March considers impulse control. Yes, the Bible has quite a bit to say about impulse control, and of course that's both a challenge and a temptation for human beings – how to manage ourselves with integrity without surrendering to temptation. The word “temptation” in this context refers both to the general meaning and the smaller or larger events that coax us into making questionable choices.

What a subject to reflect upon during Lent: temptation. Jesus encountered temptation three times during his wilderness journey, immediately following his baptism by John in the Jordan River. I imagine that his baptism profoundly affected him, because he fled the crowds on the banks of the river and entered the desert surrounding the waters, a place where man and few beasts roamed.

We know from scripture that Jesus suffered hunger, thirst, isolation, weakness...and after forty days and nights of deprivation, he encountered temptations that would rile the souls of lower beings.

First, as Matthew wrote, Satan tempted the famished Jesus to turn rocks into bread. *“No! One does not survive by bread alone,”* responded Jesus.

Next, Satan flew Jesus to the highest turret in the temple and invited him to throw himself off the top so that God could reveal God's powerful love to save him. *“No! You shall not tempt the mind of God,”* Jesus retorted.

Finally, in desperation, Satan jettied Jesus out into the universe so they could gaze back at the beautiful blue earth, and offered him the great power of all the nations if Jesus would only

agree to worship him. *“No! You shall worship the Lord your God and only the Lord your God,”* Jesus rejoined.

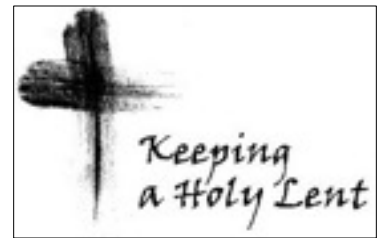
Instant response. Instant comeback using God’s law. Gaunt, with parched mouth and rumbling stomach, Jesus rejected these temptations to his physical pain, his ego, and his very human desire to control. Jesus, from the moment his ministry began, showed human beings how to choose what is good and right and loving even when we are at our lowest ebb.

During this time of Lent, the forty days preceding the passion of Jesus, we have the opportunity to reflect on our lives and drives and hungers. Little temptations creep up on people and we rationalize easily so that we can satisfy our own needs. But that’s not the message Jesus sends to us from the desert wilderness.

In the worst of conditions, beyond anything he had yet encountered in his life, Jesus put his love for God, first. Jesus chose goodness and love, first. Facing our own temptations, we too must choose between what makes us feel better immediately, or whether to do God’s will, which seldom brings instant gratification. It’s not an easy choice.

Lent is the time to reflect upon our journey and consider how we respond to temptation. I am so thankful that God is with us as we walk this arduous path.

In faith and love, **Pastor Becky**



Baptism, Membership, Holy Communion

From time to time, folks inquire about these topics. We always want to respond to your questions and assist you as needed in any decisions you are considering.

Traditionally, many people choose Easter Sunday for their own or family baptisms. If you would like to talk about this possibility, please call Pastor Becky. Easter Sunday will be April 16, this year.

Membership is a celebration that is held year round. Are you wondering what it means to become a member of this church? If so, we welcome your interest but do not pressure you. Come and talk at any time. Whatever may be your personal journey, you are invited into fellowship with our church.



Holy Communion in the United Church of Christ denomination (we are a UCC church) is offered to any and all people who wish to receive this sacrament, including people of all ages. It is not necessary that you first be baptized or confirmed in order to receive this sacrament. Jesus would not turn you away from the table and neither do we.

Do you have any other concern or subject that you would like to talk about? You can call Pastor Becky or any of our church folk to find out more about our church and its people and practices. Your interest is most welcome!

From the friends, members, and pastor of the Preble Congregational United Church of Christ

UCC Daily Devotional



A Time for Something New

Emily Heath, March 4, 2017

"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven . . . "
Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

In the 1960's a band put the words of Ecclesiastes to music, and the world came to know them not so much as Scripture, but as song. Whenever I preach on this passage I see a faint look of recognition in the eyes of the congregation. And after church someone always says to me, "I didn't know that was in the Bible . . . I thought it was just a song!"

I'm not sure anything is "just a song," even a song. Music has the magical power of transcending time and space and, at its best, lifting us up into God's presence.

There's a reason why music plays such an important part in our corporate worship. It's not a performance; it's praising God in an extraordinary language and helping others to do the same.

And yet, I can't carry a tune in a bucket. I confess to making sure my microphone is turned off before each hymn on Sundays, and to mumbling along. I love listening to music; I'm just not that good at making it. I can pray out loud and preach all day long, but don't ask me to sing.

Recently, though, I've begun to sing with less fear. I still don't hit all the notes, but I at least join my voice with the congregation's. Why? Because while music may not be my native tongue, I'm still invited into the song.

The same is true when people tell me they can't pray because they're "no good at it."

Whoever gave us the idea that prayer was something we had to be "good at"? Prayer is just about talking to God. And if I can sing, you can pray.

This Lent, we are invited into new relationships with God. In Lent we are invited to push past our fears and live our faith in new ways. We sing, we pray, we tell our truths in new ways. And we find that God is always there, cheering us on.

Prayer

God, for everything there is a season. In this season of transformation, give us the faith to connect to you in new ways.

Mark Your Calendars!

Events in March

Adult Bible Study, every Tuesday at 6:30 PM in the Riehlman Room.

3/12, 2:30 pm, Ecclesiastical Council for Pastor Becky West, Preble Congregational UCC

3/15, 6:30 pm, Trustees meeting

3/16, 4-6 pm, Community Food Pantry

3/18, 10 am, Emergency Meal planning meeting

3/26, 3 pm, Installation of the Rev. Vicki Burtson as pastor to the Homer Cong UCC; ordination of Rachel Ditch to the UCC, and installation of Rachel as Director of the Cortland County Council of Churches. All are invited.

Early Events in April

4/2, 11 am, CE committee meeting

4/5, 6:30 pm, Church Council meeting

4/9, 10 am, Palm Sunday, Lou Scott leads worship and preaches

Announcing Pi Day, March 19th !



The Christian Education committee came up with the great idea to celebrate Pi Day by bringing and sharing pies of all kinds for fellowship following worship on 3/19.

Pi, as *EVERYONE KNOWS*, is the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter, and 3/14 is the official day of celebration. Why is this fact a reason to celebrate?

“The beauty of pi, in part, is that it puts infinity within reach,” says The New Yorker columnist and Cornell Professor of Mathematics, Steven Strogatz. And it’s tantalizing because while the numerical digits of pi go on forever, they still embody the order manifested in a perfect circle.

Who knew? Waves, the ebb and flow of tides, the gentle breathing of a baby, the rhythms of sleep and wakefulness, the need to design buildings to withstand earthquakes: pi is at the heart of all of these and much, much more.

What a great reason to eat pie together. Come one, come all, bring some kind of pie and a friend! Pizza, quiche, berry, cream, pork pie, pot pie, shepherd’s pie – you name it – we’ll share them together!

From Our Moderator

The next church council meeting will be held on Wednesday April 5, 2017 at 6:30. This will be a full council meeting. Reports, from any committee who wishes to submit them, should be gotten to Kadene Limmer no later than Friday, March 31. Please email the reports to lammers@earthlink.net, or leave the report in the moderator box in the church office.

We will be having a follow-up discussion about fundraising and the Trustee’s will be talking about their proposal for the front porch work. Anyone who is interested in the front porch project is encouraged to attend

this meeting. It is open to everyone in the congregation.

We will be following up this discussion with a Congregational meeting (to be announced at a later date), with the hopes of coming to a decision about the project at that time. Please join us for a lively discussion on Wednesday night.

Kadene Limmer
Moderator

Announcing a meeting on March 18, 2017 at 10 am to go over information pertaining to the emergency meals we provide during times of need. The idea of this meeting is to come together to talk about what is expected when you are the person in charge of this meal, get ideas from each other about what works well and who to call when it is your turn to plan a meal.

I am thinking that the meeting should be about an hour, but this meeting will help us all learn from each other to make this service we provide go much more smoothly.

Please join us if you want to learn more or have knowledge to share.

Thank you, Kadene Limmer

Come and Visit Our Church!

Are you hungry, thirsty, or tired? Do you need a friend? Call any of us who comes to this church to let us know how we can share your walk. We are here for you. This month, Lee Benson is our special contact person, but you are invited to talk with others, too.

Lee can be reached at 607-345-3950, and Pastor Becky at 315-456-8746.



The greatest happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved.

~Victor Hugo~

EASTER FLOWERS

Choices: (8 inch pots)

Daffodil **\$10.00 each** **number** _____

Tulip **\$10.00 each** **number** _____

Lily **\$10.00 each** **number** _____

Azalea **\$10.00 each** **number** _____

Total \$_____ ***All orders are due April 4th!**

Given in memory of _____

Given in honor of _____

Ordered by _____



Joy in the Morning

By Joy Niswender

March Celebrations

- March 1: Maureen Knapp
2: Peggy Searles
3: Wendy Ward
5: Steve Wilson
6: Dylan Shirley
7: Chip McCutcheon
8: Nathan Baldwin
9: Carley Jean Sweet
25: Rachel Waffner
27: Megan Podsiedlik
30: Ellen Shirley



Each year as the Lenten season begins an empty tree appears at the front of the sanctuary. As each week of Lenten progresses the youth of our Sunday School make ornaments to hang on the tree related to the scripture lesson of the day and their lesson in class. Watch our tree as we go through the season of Lent.

Most of us are opposed to change, even though we protest that we are not! But if there is any valid unwritten law, it is that there is constant change at work in our universe, in our environment and in our personal lives.

With the forces that want change, there are always some that vehemently, and sometimes violently, are opposed to the idea of unsettling their worlds, even a little bit.

When we observe the changes that have already occurred, some for the good and some not so good, through the ages, we find that here they come ready or not!

If it is a moral issue, we truly need to stand firm, preferring to be in the right with a few rather than caving in to the shouts of the many. But if it's a case where our immediate world will be invaded by the forces of progress, we may need to concede that time marches on, and brings with it new ideas, new ways of doing things, and maybe a new attitude on our part.

Proverbs 27:1 "Do not boast about tomorrow for you do not know what a day may bring."

Pi Day, March 19th!

Come worship together and share a pie meal in celebration of Pi Day!

(which is actually Tuesday, March 14)

All are welcome!

Pi - as every school kid knows, is the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter.

What better reason to celebrate this day than by eating pie?

Have some fun and share pie of all kinds: pizza, quiche, meat, berry, cream, you name it!



